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ABSTRACT

This Child Development Associate (CDA) training module, the first in a series of 16, provides a course in child behavior observation and systematic recordkeeping skills for bilingual/bicultural preschool teacher trainees. Exercises in observation are designed to lead the trainee from biased ways of looking at children to the use of techniques of empirical observation of children's behavior. Five purposes of behavioral observation in instructional settings (including planning for individualization of instruction and evaluating achievement) are listed and briefly discussed. Also presented is a series of checklists for assessing children's learning styles and social, gross and fine motor, language, perceptual, cognitive, and self-help skills. Guidelines for using the checklists and examples of correctly completed checklists are included. Child observation, diary record and case study forms are also provided. Training activities which utilize selected checklists and forms are suggested. This module focuses on specific teacher behaviors that directly relate to CDA Competencies 2 and 3. (RH)

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LEARNING TO OBSERVE YOUNG CHILDREN IN A BILINGUAL-MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Bilingual/Bicultural

Child Development Associate

Pilot Project

MODULE I

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Our Lady of the Lake University of San Antonio

San Antonio, Texas

LEARNING TO OBSERVE YOUNG CHILDREN IN A BILINGUAL-MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Joyce H. Coleman

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C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

PREFACE vi

PRE-TEST 10

GLOSSARY 11

INTRODUCTION 15

DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF OBSERVATION 19

PURPOSES OF OBSERVATION 23

TYPES OF OBSERVATIONAL RECORDS 29

POST-TEST 106

REFERENCES 107

PREFACE

Observing young children in order to identify specific behaviors is a basic skill needed by all teachers. Without this ability, a teacher is unable to effectively identify individual needs, diagnose problem areas or develop appropriate educational goals or objectives. Observation is an on-going process; it occurs throughout each day and each activity. Teachers who are effective observers of young children bring to the classroom a special awareness and sensitivity that enables them to create a learning environment that meets the needs of all of the children.

This module, "Learning to Observe Young Children in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment," was developed because observation is basic to everything that happens in the classroom and because observation of pre-school teachers in Day Care and Headstart programs revealed a critical need for further training in this area. Although this module was designed specifically for Headstart and Day Care teachers who participated in a Bilingual/Bicultural Child Development Associate Pilot Training Project at Our Lady of the Lake University of San Antonio, it has been tested and used successfully with other groups of pre-school teachers and with university students in training to become teachers of young children.

While the content of this module is designed for individualized or self-paced usage, it is strongly recommended that this module be used in conjunction with academic instruction and on-site instruction. The kinds of interactions

that occur in group discussions during academic instruction and on-site instruction among instructors and other teachers provide the motivation, reinforcement and intellectual stimulation that is needed by the teacher. The academic instructors and trainers who developed and tested this module found that learning was facilitated when the module was used as a part of the academic instruction and on-site instruction.

Entry skills needed by trainees to use this module successfully are....

1. The ability to read and comprehend English at the eighth grade level.
2. The ability to follow written instructions.
3. An awareness of how young children develop.
4. An awareness of significant areas of child development (motor, language, cognitive, social, self-help).
5. An understanding of the cultures of the children.
6. An awarenesss of the special needs of individual children.
7. The ability to remember and write down what has been seen or heard.

This module focuses on specific behaviors that directly relate to:

COMPETENCE II.- Advance Physical and Intellectual Competence

Functional Areas: Physical, Cognitive, Language and Creative

COMPETENCE III.- Build Positive Self-Concept and Individual Strength

Functional Area: Individual Strength

This module is first in the recommended sequence of usage. The sequence of modules is a result of the identified critical needs of the CDA trainees in the Bilingual/Bicultural CDA Pilot Training Project at Our Lady of the Lake University. The competencies in the modules were addressed in priority, taking into account the critical needs necessary for effective teaching. The sequence has been tested with other groups of teachers and seems to also be effective.

The recommended sequence of usage of the modules is:

Module I	Learning to Observe Young Children in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module II	Getting To Know and Like Myself Better
Module III	Planning Effectively for Young Children in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module IV	Creating a Bilingual-Bicultural Learning Environment for Young Children
Module V	Helping Young Children Develop Social Skills in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module VI	Helping Young Children Develop Motor Skills in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module VII	Helping Young Children Develop Language Skills in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module VIII	Helping Young Children Develop Cognitive Skills in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module IX	Helping Young Children Develop Self-Help Skills in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module X	Setting the Stage for Effective Learning in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module XI	Teachers Planning and Working With Parents From a Bilingual-Multicultural Community
Module XII	Juegos - Cuentos - Cantos - Y - Rimas
Module XIII	Artesanias Mexico - Americanas
Module XIV	Teaching Concepts to Young Children Through Cultural Cooking Experiences
Module XV	Supplementary Administrative Responsibilities of Staff Working in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment
Module XVI	Helping Young Children Develop a Positive Self-Concept

The competencies that a trainer, academic instructor or group facilitator need to use this module effectively with bilingual/bicultural trainees are as follows:

1. Knowledge of early childhood growth and development.
2. Experience teaching pre-school children.
3. Experience working with parents.
4. First-hand knowledge of the cultures of the children and the community where the teachers work.
5. The ability to speak Spanish and English.
6. The ability to explain and demonstrate the content in a manner compatible with the learning styles of the trainees.
7. Experience teaching adults.

P R E - T E S T

Prepare a case study on one child. Use a special education child if you have one in your class or center. This will give you experience collecting information that you might not otherwise obtain. Be sure that you identify the problem behavior of the child studied, give recommendations for resolving the problem and develop some eduational objectives for helping the child in the classroom.

In the process of gathering information on the child, complete each of the developmental checklists and the learning styles checklist. Also use the child observation form and the diary record form. (See Types of Observational Records section for sample forms.)

When you have finished the task, check your study with your academic instructor or your trainer.

G L O S S A R Y

An understanding of these words will help you to better understand the content of this module.

Academic Learnings -- knowledge or information learned in a school or teaching situation.

Assessment -- to determine the correctness, value or importance of a behavior, act, etc.

Auditory Learning -- knowledge or information learned through the sense of hearing.

Behavior -- any action or response; the way one behaves.

Behavioral Objective -- a goal or objective that is directed toward a specific, observable behavior.

Behavior Problem -- any behavior that is considered inappropriate, disruptive or difficult to manage.

Bilingual -- pertaining to two languages; ability to speak two languages.

Checklist Administration -- the act or process of administering/giving a list of items.

Classroom Environment -- the circumstances, objects, or conditions which are part of the classroom.

Concept -- an idea conceived or understood in the mind; an idea that has evolved from particular instances or experiences

Cooperative group situation -- a situation in which members of the group work together in a cooperative, helpful manner.

Criteria -- a standard on which a judgment or decision is made.

Diary -- a record of events, or observations kept at frequent intervals; hourly; daily.

Diary Record Form -- a form designed to be used for the recording of events or observation at frequent intervals.

Discriminate -- to distinguish between

Disruptive Behavior -- any behavior that causes disorder.

Educational Goal -- a goal or objective designed to increase knowledge or develop a skill.

Emotional Environment -- those aspects of a situation that relate to feelings, attitudes and interactions between persons.

Evaluation -- an appraisal of value or correctness.

Field Independent -- characteristics of a learning style in which the task, object or event is more significant than the background or social aspects of the situation.

Field Sensitive -- characteristics of a learning style in which the background or social environment is more significant than the task, objects or event.

Geometric Forms -- simple geometric shapes as straight lines, circles, squares, triangles, etc.

Humanized -- to adapt to human nature; to give non-human objects human characteristics.

Independent Activity -- an activity or task to be done individually or by one's self.

Individualization -- to adapt to the needs or special circumstances of an individual.

Instruction -- the act of teaching; instructing.

Language Skills -- those abilities relating to the use of one's language.

Learning -- knowledge or skill acquired by instruction, study or experience.

Learning Process -- the manner or way in which learning occurs.

Learning Situation -- the circumstances or place in which learning occurs.

Learning Style -- a particular set of characteristics that make up the way one approaches learning.

Learning Task -- a particualr activity , behavior or action to be learned.

Lesson -- a specific exercise to be learned.

Manipulative -- something to be handled; used with hands.

Marking Code -- a system or way of marking information.

Motivation -- the condition of being motivated; something that influences or provides an incentive.

Motor Skills -- skills that enable one to move about in space; to use the body to perfom physical tasks.

Multiply Handicapped -- having more than one physical, emotional or intellectual handicap or dysfunction.

Objective -- something toward which effort is directed.

Observation -- an act of recognizing and noting a fact or occurrence.

Observation Form -- a form upon which an observed fact or occurrance is recorded.

Observational Record -- a series of recorded observations.

Peer Relationship -- interactions between children or persons of the same age.

Perceptual-Cognitive -- relating to one's ability to take in information and form concepts; develop thinking skills.

Performance -- the ability to perform; something accomplished.

Physical Environment -- concrete materials, equipment and facilities that make up a particular situation.

Preferred Language -- the language that one chooses to use most of the time.

Reinforcement -- to strengthen by additional assistance or support.

School Vocabulary -- words used primarily at school; in the classroom.

Second Language -- the language learned after the first language.

Self-Help Skills -- abilities related to the care of one's self.

Sibling -- one's brother or sister.

Skill -- the ability to use one's knowledge, dexterity, or coordination effectively in performing a task.

Skills Checklist -- a list of items related to the development of a particular skill.

Skills Sequence -- the order in which skills are presented.

Social Skills -- specific behaviors related to the interaction between individuals.

Social Worker -- one who works with the investigation, treatment and material aid of the economically underpriviledged and socially maladjusted.

Socio-economic Status -- relating to one's social and economic situation or position.

Tactile Learning -- knowledge or information gained through the sense of touch.

Test -- an examination, observation, or evaluation to determine ability or knowledge acquired.

Test Performance -- how one performs on a test.

Transfer -- the carry-over of learned responses from one type of situation to another.

Visual Clue -- visual stimulant that leads one to an understanding.

Visual Learning -- knowledge or information gained through the sense of sight.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

It is the beginning of a new school year. As many as twenty children have been entrusted to you and the other adults in your room. You can help each child to build those parts of himself that will help develop and stretch his mind, his body and his spirit. You can also help each child block or close off those parts of himself so that boredom, frustration and mindless acceptance develop instead of those things that are so essential to a developing child. You may be saying, "I could never do that. I want all of my children to grow and stretch their minds. I do all kinds of things in my room. We take the children on walks and field trips and have cooking experiences and everthing." Yes, but do you help the children learn how to S T R E T C H their minds and their spirits? Do you SEE the children's needs? Do you SEE where they've been? Do you SEE where they're going? A good teacher does so much more than just present activities. A good teacher really SEES the child's need. She SEES him in the process of learning. She SEES where the child is going. She SEES his mind stretch, his body grow and his spirit unfold before her very eyes.

A lot of beautiful words but impossible in a classroom of twenty children! Wrong! It is very possible if a teacher learns how to observe.

The skill of observing is something many of us lost a long time ago as teachers and parents told us what to see and what to do. We have lost the ability to LOOK and SEE what is actually happening. Our own experiences, biases and prejudices color what we see.

Test your skills of observation by doing the following exercise.

Go outside in your backyard, your school playground or to a nearby park. Take a pad and pencil with you. Write down everything you see and hear during a fifteen minute period.

What kind of an experience was it for you? Did you have difficulty seeing beyond the number of trees, and cars and people that you saw and heard? Were you able to SEE the leaves move gently in the wind? Were you able to SEE the crickets, grasshoppers and butterflies move about in the grass and sky? Could you describe how the people looked that passed your way without making a value judgment, e.g., the man looked angry. Did you hear more than cars honking, brakes screeching, vehicles starting and stopping? Were you able to SEE beyond those things that we see and take for granted every day?

Share your experience with another teacher. Talk about what you saw or didn't see and perhaps why.

Select one person to observe for ten or fifteen minutes. Write down everything you see the person do. A shopping center mall, a bus station or a hotel lobby are good places to find people to observe without appearing obvious or rude.

Share your observations with your academic instructor or trainer.

Learning to really SEE again, to OBSERVE, can be difficult for those who have forgotten how or for those who think they see when they really don't. Open up your mind and let yourself be free to learn how to observe again. Your skill as a teacher depends upon your ability to observe and understand the children in your care. This module is designed to help you really see again so that you can provide a classroom environment that helps children be their best.

DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF OBSERVATION

When we use the term observation, we are talking about looking at and recording child behavior (sometimes teacher behavior is observed too). If the recording is done in an organized or systematic way, the observations will be much more meaningful and useful since a teacher makes observations to help her make decisions about what to teach, how to teach, and how to organize the classroom environment.

You may be asking yourself, "What is a behavior?" A behavior is any action of a child that can be seen, heard, counted or measured. For example, you can see a child hit another child, thread beads, strike a nail with a hammer, have difficulty folding paper, have difficulty tracing within lines, etc. You can hear a child ask questions, use descriptive words, say the names for things, etc. You can, over a period of time count how many times each of these behaviors occur. You can chart or measure progress the child makes in each of the behaviors.

You cannot see the process the child is going through. You cannot see him think. You cannot see his understanding, You can however, infer or draw a conclusion about what the child is thinking or understanding by observing his behavior. For example, if you observe a child matching colors using different materials and in various

situations, you can conclude or infer that the child is learning to discriminate. You cannot see the learning process, but the child's behavior tells you that a specific kind of learning is taking place.

Read the following statements and mark those that are behaviors with a (+).

The Child.....

_____ 1. Placed a marker on the picture of the the object named.

_____ 2. Discriminates colors.

_____ 3. Is learning to read.

_____ 4. Sorts blue and red objects correctly.

_____ 5. Names the pictures of family members.

_____ 6. Is developing new language skills.

_____ 7. Has good motor coordination.

_____ 8. Stepped off the walking board three times while walking across.

_____ 9. Puts five beads on a string to match a pattern.

_____ 10. Is developing social skills.

* See next page for answers.

Test you skill in observing behaviors. Take a pad and pencil and sit in an area of your classroom where you can observe a specific child for fifteen minutes. Write down all of the child's behaviors - during that period of time; when you have finished, read over your list. Mark each behavior that can be seen or heard, counted and measured. If any of your items do not meet this criteria, they are not behaviors. If you had difficulty identifying behaviors, repeat the exercise.

ANSWERS: If you marked items 1, 4, 5, 8 and 9 as behaviors you are correct. Each of these statements are behaviors because they can be seen, heard, counted and measured. Items 2, 3, 6,7 and 10 are not behaviors because they cannot be seen, heard, counted or measured. These statements refer to a process that cannot be directly observed. We can conclude or infer that a specific skill has been learned only after observing specific behaviors.

As you become skilled in observing behaviors, you will be better able to....

1. Identify the needs of each child.
2. Recognize problems.
3. Make decisions regarding the individualization of instruction.
4. Evaluate each child's progress.
5. Identify whether a child can transfer a learned behavior to everyday situations.

In the following section is a discussion of each of these points.

PURPOSES OF OBSERVATION

There are many reasons why teachers, parents, principals and others make observations of young children. Some of the most important reasons are as follows:

1. Identify behaviors that a child brings with him to a learning situation.
2. Determine a pattern of behavior that may identify a specific problem.
3. Make decisions regarding the individualization of instruction.
4. Evaluate whether or not a child has met a lesson objective(s).
5. Identify whether a child can transfer a learned behavior to everyday situations.

1. <u>To identify behaviors that a child brings with him to a learning situation</u>.

   Before you can begin to teach in a way that will meet the children's needs, you must identify what the child already knows and what skills have already developed. Observing for the purpose of determining the behaviors the child brings to school helps you to avoid planning experiences that are inappropriate for a child. If a child has already learned a behavior and your learning activity is designed to teach that behavior, the child will be bored and disinterested. On the other hand, if your learning activity is designed to teach a behavior that is beyond a child's ability, he may become very frustrated. By carefully observing the behavior each child brings to a learning

experience you will have the information you need to plan learning activities that will be meaningful and meet their needs.

You may be asking yourself, "How can I do this?" Where do I begin? What behaviors are most important to identify?" A checklist which is designed to help you identify specific behaviors in important areas of child development is very helpful. Five such checklists, with instructions for use are included in the next section. (Language, skills checklist, social skills checklist, perceptual-cognitive skills checklist, self-help skills checklist, and motor skills checklist.)

2. To determine a pattern of behavior that may identify a specific problem.

It is not always easy to determine the cause of some children's behavior. One or two observations may not give you the information you need. You may need to make observations over a period of days or weeks before you can identify the problem. For example, if Javier frequently becomes disruptive during independent activity time you may need to observe him during independent activity time for several days or a week before you determine that he becomes disruptive when working with materials that involve the use of small muscles and that he has much difficulty working with these materials without adult direction. You may need to observe an extremely shy child very carefully for weeks before you determine the situations in which he is most likely to participate and the children he seems to want to

reach out to. When observing for the purpose of identifying a pattern of behavior it is important to keep a precise record of the child's behavior indicating the time, the setting and exactly what behaviors were observed. This will enable you to more accurately identify the child's problem. The Diary Record form in the next section (page 91) is very useful for making these kinds of observations.

3. Make decisions regarding the individualization of instruction. Some children learn better when tasks are modeled for them or when concrete manipulative materials are used, while others learn better when they are allowed to discover the solution for themselves. Some children learn easier in a cooperative group situation while others learn easier when working at a task independently. Children like adults, have their own style of learning. As a teacher of young children you need to identify the learning styles of the children in your class so that you can plan classroom experiences which will be compatible with their learning styles. The Learning Styles checklist in the next section is useful in identifying some specific behaviors related to learning styles. Individualizing instruction to meet children's learning styles is an important part of creating an effective learning environment.

4. To evaluate whether or not a child has met a lesson objective(s). It is essential that you take as much care in observing how a child responds during an activity as you do in observing to plan the activity. You must know whether or not each child performs the behavior that is expected in the behavioral objective. Sometimes we become too involved

in doing an activity and we forget why the activity was planned and what behavior each child is expected to perform. An effective teacher learns to observe each child's responses during an activity without disrupting the flow of the activity. If the objective of the activity is for each child to string six beads to match a model string sequence, then it should be noted whether each child did it. A pad and pencil kept near you or in your pocket will enable you to jot down each child's response so that you won't forget who met the objective during a busy day. If a child is unable to do it and you observed carefully, you may be able to identify why, making it easier for you to plan the next bead stringing activity for that child.

Observing to evaluate progress is an ongoing process:

1. You observe to plan
2. You present an activity based upon your observation
3. You observe during the activity
4. You plan another experience based upon that observation
5. You present the activity and observe while presenting it

and on, and on. The following spiral illustarated the process.

plan activity present activity observe plan activity present activity observe plan activity present activity observe

It can be very helpful to a child if you talk with him about his progress. Children need to know how they are doing. When you talk with children about their progress you are teaching them to evaluate their own behavior. This is a very valuable skill.

5. To identify whether a child can transfer a learned behavior to everyday situations.

Observation is one of the most effective ways of determining whether or not a child can perform a task learned in a teaching activity when he is involved in another situation. As a teacher you want your children to learn the behaviors you are teaching and it is exciting when you see such learning taking place, but you also want children to apply what they learn to other situations. For example, if you have been working on teaching a group of children to button and unbutton during planned activity time, you will want to observe those children playing in the dress-up corner to see whether they can button and unbutton using different clothing items. If you have been teaching a child to sort the colors red and yellow, you will want to observe how the child works with other color sorting materials on the manipulative shelves. To see whether he can transfer his color sorting skills to other colors. You should spend time each day observing the children during independent activity time to determine how they are applying behaviors that you are teaching during planned activity time. Those observations, coupled with your observations of the children's progress during planned activity time, give you a lot of knowledge to use in preparing your class activities. The Child Observation

form in the next section (page 87) can be used to record children's behavior. If the forms are not available, a pad and pencil can be used just as effectively.

Test your knowledge of the material you have just read by listing and explaining five purposes for making observations of young children. When you have finished, check your answers by reviewing the section, Purposes of Observation.

TYPES OF OBSERVATIONAL RECORDS

The first step in the process of observation is to determine the purpose for making the observation. This determines what will be observed which leads to the second step, determining the type of observational record to use. Because different types of records give us different kinds of information it is important that the observational record provide the kind of information needed to make the instructional decision you must make. For example, if you want to find out how a child or a group of children learn best, the developmental checklist forms will not necessarily give you that information, but the learning styles checklist will. On the other hand, if you want to identify where a child is in language development, the anecdotal record may give you some information, but not as much as the language skills checklist.

Once you have determined your purpose and the type of observational record you want to make, be specific in recording behaviors, make your observations in a systematic manner, and collect enough information so that you can make appropriate instructional decisions. Observation can take place at any time; during any activity. You can even observe a child or children while doing other things. For example, you can observe a particular child during lunch and also supervise the larger group. You can play with a group outside and at the same time observe a particular child.

E R R A T A

Page 30 Guidelines for Using Skills Checklists

Add: after first paragraph:

Each checklist is coded to indicate levels of performance of children's chronological ages 0 - 5.0 years of age. This will enable you to determine an appropriate beginning point when administering the checklists. It is not necessary to administer the items below a child's level of performance. The checklists begin at 0 years of age to accomodate teachers who have severely handicapped children in their classroom. The coding level of performance by chronological age is as follows:

Level I is for children .0 - 3.0

Level II is for children 3.0 - 4.0

Level III is for children 4.0 - 5.0

Guidelines For Using Skills Checklist

The following checklist has been designed to help you identify where children are in the development of some specific skills. The cover page has space for identifying information and directions for coding as you administer the checklist. Since you will be checking each child's development, there is space at the top of the checklist for each child's name in your classroom.

Some important guides for administering the checklist are:

1. Observe and record each item on the checklist as you work with children individually, in a small group or in a large group as appropriate to the task being observed.
2. Divide up responsibility for observing and recording items on the checklist so that the teacher and teacher aide do not duplicate the observation and recording of the same items.
3. Identify and plan activities for those items on the checklist that require a formal situation in order for the task to be effectively observed, e.g., pointing to an object that matches a sound heard.
4. Identify those tasks on the checklist that can be observed and recorded informally throughout the day as children participate in various activities. Record the children's performance of those tasks as you observe them.
5. Use this checklist throughout the year to monitor each child's progress. Checking children's development is an on-going process.
6. Use the information acquired through the administration of the checklist to plan individual and group learning experiences for the children in your classroom. (See "Planning Effectively for Young Children in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment," module III).

SOCIAL SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child does the task most of the time

\- If the child does the task some of the time

0 If the child rarely does the task

* Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

SOCIAL SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: Mrs. L. Garcia

Center: Lighthouse

Class: 3yr. olds

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child does the task most of the time

\- If the child does the task some of the time

0 If the child rarely does the task

SAMPLE

* Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

+ If the child can do the task

- If the child is learning to do the task

0 If the child cannot do the task

* Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

FINE MOTOR SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child can do the task

\- If the child is learning to do the task

0 If the child cannot do the task

* Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

LANGUAGE SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child does the task

\- If the child is learning to do the task

0 If the child cannot do the task

* Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

PERCEPTUAL SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child does the task

\- If the child is learning to do the task

0 If the child cannot do the task

*Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

COGNITIVE SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child does the task

\- If the child is learning to do the task

0 If the child cannot do the task

*Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

SELF-HELP SKILLS CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ If the child can do the task

\- If the child is learning to do the task

0 If the child cannot do the task

* Adapted from draft developed by Yolanda R. Molina

To test your ability to observe children's behavior using a skills checklist, administer either the language skills checklist or the cognitive skills checklist to a group of young children.

Learning Styles Checklist

If your purpose in observing is to discover ways that your children approach learning or learn best, the following Learning Styles Checklist will help you do this. This checklist is adapted from the child rating forms for Field Independent Observable Behaviors and Field Sensitive Observable Behaviors developed by Manuel Ramirez III, Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Cruz. The checklist looks at learning style behaviors as they relate to a child's relationship to peers, relationship to the teacher and relationship to instruction and curriculum. Each of these areas are significant when looking at how children approach learning tasks.

The marking code differs from the earlier checklists in that (+) means that the child always exhibits the behavior, (-) means that the child sometimes exhibits the behavior and (0) means that the child almost never exhibits the behavior.

Study the behaviors carefully. You will see that each (a) and (b) set of behaviors reflect different styles or ways of approaching learning. For example, under Relationship to Peers, 1.a the behavior is, prefers to work independently while 1.b is, likes to work with others to achieve a common goal. As you can see, a child who approaches learning independently and a child who approaches learning cooperately are exhibiting very different styles of learning. A teacher who organizes her classroom primarily around independent

learning tasks will not be meeting the needs of the child who needs a cooperative learning environment in order to learn best.

The next pair of behaviors, 2.a likes to compete and gain individual recognition, and 2.b likes to assist others, also reflect two differing approaches to learning. If a teacher primarily structures her classroom around individual recognition and competition, the child who prefers to work in a cooperative, non-competitive situation will not have his or her needs met.

As you continue to examine the pairs of behaviors you will begin to see two very different patterns of behavior or styles of learning emerging. Dr. Ramirez, et.al. who have researched the area of learning styles have a name for these styles of learning. The (a) behaviors fall into a pattern or style that is called Field Independent. The (b) behaviors fall into a pattern or style that is called Field Sensitive.

LEARNING STYLES CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

MARKING CODE:

\+ Almost always

\- Sometimes

0 Almost never

* Adapted from child rating form for Field Independent Observable Behavior and Field Sensitive Observable Behavior developed by Manuel Ramirez III, Ph.D

As you can see, the Field Independent child (a behaviors):

- prefers to work alone;
- is motivated by competition and personal recognition;
- pays little attention to others or the environment when working on a task;
- needs little physical or emotional contact with teacher;
- establishes a formal relationship with the teacher;
- likes to try new tasks without the teacher's help;
- likes to finish first
- is motivated and reinforced by tasks and materials;
- needs information about individual parts or elements when learning new concepts to be presented in a straight forward and factual manner.

The Field Sensitive child on the other hand, (b behaviors):

- likes to work with others on a task;
- likes to assist others;
- is concerned with the feelings and opinions of others as well as the physical environment;
- needs an open warm relationship with the teacher;
- seeks to know the teacher as a person;
- likes assistance from the teacher when attempting a new task;
- is motivated by reinforcement from the teacher;
- needs information about the overall picture when learning a new concept;
- prefers that concepts be presented in a humanized or story format that is related to personal experiences and interests.

A look at the sample Learning Styles Checklist will show you that all children do not neatly fall into the (a) style, Field Independent or (b) style, Field Sensitive. Some children exhibit behaviors that fall into both styles. Also, there are some children who can respond in either style, depending upon the situation. In his research, Dr. Ramirez found that many Mexican-American children prefer the Field Sensitive approach to learning because of the teaching style used by many Mexican-American mothers and because of the behaviors valued by the culture e.g., cooperativeness rather than competitiveness. As a teacher of young children from different ethnic groups and socio-economic levels, it is very important that you determine how each child approaches learning. With that information, you can then match your teaching style to the children's style of learning. This will probably mean that you will have to learn how to teach using both styles of learning. Public education too often has emphasized development of the field independent cognitive style. This has been unfair to those children whose preferred cognitive style is field sensitive. By adapting your classroom environment to include both styles of teaching, you will help children learn according to their preferred cognitive style and you will also help them learn another cognitive style. This can help children function more effectively in diverse intellectual and social environments. (See "Planning Effectively for Young Children in a Bilingual-Multicultural Environment," module II.)

LEARNING STYLES CHECKLIST

Teacher: _____

Center: _____

Class: _____

SAMPLE

MARKING CODE:

\+ Almost always

\- Sometimes

0 Almost never

* Adapted from child rating form for Field Independent Observable Behavior and Field Sensitive Observable Behavior developed by Manuel Ramirez III, Ph.D

Administer the Learning Styles Checklist using at least ten children. Make sure that at least six of the children are bilingual and Mexican-American. Compare your results with other trainees who are also administering the checklist.

1. Did some of the children prefer primarily one style?
2. Did some of the children exhibit behaviors in both styles?
3. Did the Mexican-American children generally prefer the Field Sensitive style of learning?

Child Observation Form

This form was designed for use when you need to make observations on a child during a particular activity or in a specific setting, e.g., dramatic play, outside playground, home. The form provides space for the time, a description of the setting, purpose of the evaluation, as well as the observed behavior. These factors are important to note because they provide information that sometimes explains the behavior. For example, the time of day is significant because that can effect how a child feels. If the observation occurs early in the morning, and the child came to school upset, you will understand that something occurred before coming to school that is effecting the behavior. If observations of the child made later in the day reflect a more positive behavior you will understand that school factors are influencing his behavior. If your observations of the child at these times remain consistent, you will have some important information to use in working with the child.

As a result of this information you would need to make a home visit and observe how the child interacts with his parents, siblings, grand-parents, etc. This same form can be used for the home visit because you will need to note the same information.

Study the following sample form to get a feel for how to record your observations. When recording your observation it is important that you be very specific and write only observed behaviors. Leave your impressions for later. Also, record your comments as soon as possible after making the observation so that you don't forget what you saw and add your own judgments.

CHILD OBSERVATION FORM

Observer:_____ Date:_____

Center:_____ Time: _____to_____

Child's Name:_____ Age:_____

Parent's Name:_____

Setting: (describe)

Purpose for Observation:

Observed Behaviors:

SAMPLE

CHILD OBSERVATION FORM

Observer: J. C. Date: January 6, 1978

Center: San Jose Time: 9:00 to 9:25

Child's Name: Javier Martinez Age: 4

Parent's Name: Maria E. Martinez

Setting: (describe)

Large group area in the center of the classroom. Javier and eleven other children are seated in a large circle for Circle time activity.

Purpose for Observation:

To observe ways that Javier interacts with peers.

Observed Behaviors:

Javier consistently watched everything that happened. He looked at the teacher as she talked. When Javier was called on he turned around and didn't respond. The teacher insisted but, Javier would not respond. He continued to watch the teacher, materials and children as soon as the teacher went on with the activity.

Use the Child Observation Form to record your observations of one child during a class activity and during outside play. Use the form to record your observations of the same child during a home visit. Select a child that is considered a "problem child."

1. Do the three observations reveal anything new that you did not already know about the child?

Diary Record Form

This form is designed for use when you need to record observations that cover a period of time e.g., all morning, all day. It is sometimes necessary to observe a child daily and for long periods of time when you need to identify a pattern of behavior in order to discover the basis of a problem.

For example, if Javier is a "disruptive and uncooperative," child, before you can deal effectively with him, you need to make a running record of his behavior each day and for as many days as is necessary. You will need to record exact behaviors that occur before and after each misbehavior occurs. You will need to record the time it occurred and where it occurred. The observable behavior should include behaviors of all children associated with each misbehavior. Your observed behaviors should also include positive behaviors. When you know what happens when misbehaviors occur and what happens when positive behaviors occur, you will be able to plan how to help the child improve his behavior.

Observations made over a period of time are sometimes necessary in order to identify the source of a learning problem. For example, if Maria has difficulty cutting and using a crayon and she is 5 years old, you would suspect that she has a fine motor problem. But, in order to determine the exact nature of the fine motor problem you would need to observe her as she is involved in other activities

during the day and perhaps for several days. Your observations may reveal that she also has difficulty stacking blocks, threading beads, using a spoon and fork, buttoning, using finger paints and paintbrush, and folding paper. If this is the case, you can infer that Maria has a generalized fine-motor problem and can plan accordingly. However, your observations may show that Maria can fingerpaint well, fold paper well, stack blocks well but cannot use a paint brush or a crayon, cut with scissors, hammer a nail, use a spoon and fork without frequent spilling or thread beads. This pattern of behavior shows that Maria's fine motor problem is related to using a tool or some kind of implement. With this information your plans would be different from the first situation.

As you can see, a running record or diary of behaviors can sometimes reveal a pattern of behavior that might not be apparent if only short, one or two activity observations are made.

DIARY RECORD FORM

SAMPLE

Child Javier Martinez Age 4 years old Center San Jose

Observer J. C. Purpose of Observation: To identify how much speech Javier uses during the day.

TIME	OBSERVED BEHAVIORS	SETTING
8:30	Javier entered the room and waved good-bye to his mother. He did not attempt to speak.	Entrance to the classroom
8:45	Javier played in the block area with two other children. He spoke some words which the children seemed to understand and respond to. He used a lot of gestures to communicate	Block Area
9:00	Javier came to circle time with the children in the block area. He watched everything very closely but did not attempt to speak. Once during the "Good Morning" song he moved his lips as if trying to sing.	Large Group Area
9:30	Javier worked in a small group with Mrs. Z. He actively participated in the cutting activity. He wathced Mrs. Z. closely but attempted to speak only once when he showed her his cut out and said "teacher, mira mio."	Art Center
10:00	Javier played on the slide with David, Bobby and Juanita for about fifteen minutes. He frequently laughed and gestured. Several times he spoke but his speech was unintelligible. He then moved to the sand box and played alone building tunnels and playing with trucks.	Outdoor Play
11:00	Javier went with four other children to the bathroom to wash-up for lunch. He asked Bobby "Dame jabon."	Bathroom.
11:15	Javier ate all of his lunch but did not speak to anyone during lunch.	
12:00	Javier prepared for naptime without any hesitation. No attempt at conversation was made.	

Choose a child to focus your attention on. Select a specific behavior to observe for, e.g., interaction with peers, interaction with adults, use of concrete materials, etc. Use the Diary Record Form to record your observations of the child each morning for three days. After you have completed your observations, write your conclusion about the child's behavior. Share your information with another teacher. See if she draws the same conclusion.

The Case Study

From time to time you may be called upon to prepare an intesive study of a child. These are sometimes called case studies. A case study includes information about the child's problems, family, medical history, school behaviors, (observation) performance on test or screening and educational objectives/ goals. When preparing a case study you will need to talk with other teachers who work with the child, the parents, the center nurse and/or social worker and any other resource people such as a speech therapist who have been involved with the child. You will also need to make careful observations of the child over a period of time. Case studies are usually prepared on children who have a problem or problems that cannot be dealt with effectively without a comprehensive study of the child, e.g., severe behavior problem, multiply handicapped child.

Use the diary record form and/or the child observation form to record your observations of a child's school behavior. The developmental skills checklists will give you specific information about a child's development of skills and concepts. The learning styles checklist will help you identify how a child approaches learning. All of this information along with medical history and family background information will give you a broad base of knowledge which you can use to identify possible causes of problems. This knowledge will help you make intelligent decisions about further testing or referrals. You can also use the information to determine educational goals and objectives.

The following case study form includes the kind of information that should be obtained. Any additional information that you feel is important should also be included.

CASE STUDY FORM

Name of Child _____ Date _____

Age _____ Weight _____ Height _____

Presenting problem :

FAMILY BACKGROUND:

1. Number of parents in the home. _____
2. Number of siblings. _____
3. Child's position in the family. _____
4. Others living in the home. _____

   _____
5. Language(s) spoken in the home. _____
6. Socio-economic situation. _____
7. Occupation of parents. _____

   _____
8. Child rearing practices _____

   _____

   _____
9. Emotional environment in the home (warm and supportive vs. abusive or neglectful _____

   _____

   _____
10. Other pertinent information _____

    _____

MEDICAL HISTORY:

1. Birth information _____

2. Present health _____

3. Childhood illnesses _____

4. Chronic illnesses (allergies, asthma, ear-infection, etc.) _____

5. Health of parents and siblings _____

6. Nutritional situation in the home _____

7. Chronic behaviors like bedwetting, nail biting, stomach pains, headaches, etc. _____

_____

_____

_____

8. Other pertinent information _____

_____

_____

School Behaviors (Teacher Observations)

1. Emotional development.

2. Social skills.

3. Self-help skills.

4. Language skills.

5. Motor skills.

6. Cognitive skills.

7. Other pertinent information.

TEST OR ASSESSMENT ADMINISTERED:

CONCLUSIONS:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OR GOALS FOR THE CHILD:

SAMPLE

CASE STUDY FORM

Name of Child Javier Martinez Date January 15, 1978

Age 4 years old Weight 35 lbs. Height _____

Presenting problem :

Javier speaks in Spanish in incomplete sentences; much of his speech is unintelligible; speaks only five or six English words which are also difficult to understand.

FAMILY BACKGROUND:

1. Number of parents in the home. Mother
2. Number of siblings. 2 brothers and 2 sisters
3. Child's position in the family. 5th
4. Others living in the home. Grandmother
5. Language(s) spoken in the home. Spanish - some English
6. Socio-economic situation. Family lives on welfare (ADC and Food Stamps).
7. Occupation of parents. Mother - homemaker; Father - unknown
8. Child rearing practices. Mother uses spanking as a means of correction. There is no evidence of abuses in punishment.
9. Emotional environment in the home (warm and supportive vs. abusive or neglectful Mother is warm and loving although economic pressures cause frustration and anxiety. Grandmother is very supportive of the family.
10. Other pertinent information

MEDICAL HISTORY:

1. Birth information Javier was delivered at home by a midwife. Mother was seen for prenatal care monthly at a neighborhood clinic.

2. Present health Good except a little underweight.

3. Childhood illnesses Colds, bronchitis and ear infections. Innoculations are current for measles, rubella, DPT and mumps.

4. Chronic illnesses (allergies, asthma, ear-infection, etc.) Frequent ear infections since infancy

5. Health of parents and siblings General health seems good. Mother and children are seen for medical services at the neighborhood clinic.

6. Nutritional situation in the home Diet consists mostly of starchy, staple foods, although meat and vegetables are sometimes served. Fruit scarce. Social worker is working with mother on menu planning. Family receives food stamps.

7. Chronic behaviors like bedwetting, nail biting, stomach pains, headaches, etc. None reported

8. Other pertinent information Javier frequently ignores people when they speak to him.

School Behaviors (Teacher Observations)

1. Emotional development.

Javier seem unsure of himself. Looks to teachers and other children for approval and reassurance. He withdraws when attention is placed on him.

2. Social skills.

Javier works well with one or two children but tends to withdraw in larger groups. Frequently works alone in the learning centers. Talks very little but watches everything that is going on.

3. Self-help skills.

Javier has good self-help skills. He completely takes care of himself and his belongings. He regularly participates in routine classroom duties like serving juice, cleaning up after snack and lunch, putting away toys, etc.

4. Language skills.

Javier speaks mostly Spanish which is difficult to understand. He speaks in phrases rather than sentences. He speaks about five or six English words which are also difficult to understand. He seems to have difficulty understanding what is said to him in either language. He watches the other children and imitates what they are doing.

5. Motor skills.

Javier's gross and fine motor skills are above average for his age. He particularly enjoys outdoor activities and excels on the jingle gym.

6. Cognitive skills.

Javier recognizes and sorts most colors, sizes and shapes although he sometimes confuses their names. He has difficulty recognizing some sounds. Auditory activities are difficult for him. Javier seems to be a good problem-solver although he usually can't explain what he did or why.

7. Other pertinent information.

TEST OR ASSESSMENT ADMINISTERED:

NONE

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Javier is delayed in language development in his primary language.
2. Javier is also delayed in his emotional development and in his social skills.
3. Javier shows some signs of having a hearing loss.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Refer for a complete medical and audiological examination to determine whether Javier has a hearing loss.
2. Refer for a complete speech and language examination.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OR GOALS FOR THE CHILD:

1. Provide language experiences in his primary language, emphasizing labels and short simple sentences.
2. Provide regular speech therapy.
3. Use visual activities for teaching new concepts.
4. Provide sound experiences requiring discrimination of non-speech sounds.

P O S T - T E S T

Prepare a case study on one child. Use a special education child if you have one in your class or center. This will give you experience collecting information that you might not otherwise obtain. Be sure that you identify the problem behavior of the child studied, give recommendations for resolving the problem and develop some eduational objectives for helping the child in the classroom.

In the process of gathering information on the child,complete each of the developmental checklists and the learning styles checklist. Also use the child observation form and the diary record form. (See Types of Observational Records section for sample forms.)

When you have finished the task, check your study with your academic instructor or your trainer.

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